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Att: Donna R. Searcy, Secretary
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
1919 M Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Subject: Cable Rate Regulations
Cable Television Consumer Protection Act of 1992

We have been cable subscribers for the past ten years. We have enjoyed the greater variety of programming available from cable, but are disturbed by the current rate structure of our local cable company owned and operated by Cablevision of Woodbury, N. Y. I suggest that when the FCC issues new rate regulations, as mandated by the 1992 Cable Act, it consider the following provisions:

1. Rental charges for converters should be stated separately from monthly service charges, so that subscribers who do not require a converter or have their own, will not have to pay hidden charges for equipment they do not need (Service and rental charges are stated as separate items by all phone companies).
2. Monthly service charges for additional sets should be eliminated. Subscribers must have the right to watch the programming they are paying for in any room in their home (there is no charge for adding phones by the phone company).
3. Additional charges for remote controls should be discontinued. Today all television sets (except small portables), all video recorders, and commercially available converters come with a remote control without any extra charge. Cable companies should adopt this practice also and make remote controls available without extra charge with its rental converters, or let subscribers use their own multi-use remotes.
4. Control of rates for basic channels must include such channels offered on additional tiers or a-la-carte. If this is not done, cable companies are able to defeat rate controls by offering the most popular basic services on a high priced tier.
5. A provision in the contract subscribers must sign, states that no additional connections can be made unless made by the cable company; this provision should be declared illegal. All other utilities allow such connections, which customers or their contractors are allowed to make to phone lines, electric lines, gas and water lines; why not cable lines?

I hope the FCC will place the interest of the consumers ahead of the interest of the very profitable cable industries, as congress intended when it passed the new cable law.

Respectfully

Rolf J. Camnitzer

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cc: Mrs. Kay Smith, Cable TV
Coordinator Cleveland Heights
Senator H. Metzenbaum
Congressman L. Stokes
The Cleveland Plain Dealer

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MONTHLY CHARGES FOR ADDITIONAL TV SETS CONNECTED TO CABLE

The following appeared in the September 1992 issue of "Channels", a leaflet included in Cablevision's monthly statement:

CABLE "Q & A"

Q: Why is there an additional charge for each TV set that receives cable in a home?

A: Cablevision's additional set charges include the maintenance and care of your cable and equipment. We are also responsible for complying with FCC standards, because improperly connecting additional sets can cause signal leakage - and may interfere with Federal Aviation Administration frequencies. It can also be responsible for poor cable reception throughout entire neighborhoods.

Charges for additional TV set connections are comparable to the telephone company charging for second telephone numbers. While the telephone company does not charge for extensions to the same telephone number if you provide your own equipment, additional cable connections provide you with the ability to receive different entertainment or information programming at the same time through Cablevision-supplied equipment.

The above statement includes three reasons given for the monthly charge for additional TV sets connected to cable:

1. to make certain sets are properly connected;
2. maintenance of the cable and equipment;
3. ability to receive more than one channel at the same time through Cablevision supplied equipment.

Each of these three reasons given is misleading:

1. Proper connection is important, but this is a one time effort and should be covered by an installation charge; it should not be included continuously as part of the monthly charges.
2. Monthly charges for maintenance of the cable and equipment:
 - a) charges to maintain a short section of cable to connect a second set? That section of cable in my house never required any service, I am certain the same is true in other homes; why include charges for this?
 - b) maintenance of equipment? Yes - if a cable company converter is required, occasional repairs may be needed. No - if the cable is connected to a cable-ready TV set, in which case there is no Cablevision supplied equipment.
3. Monthly service charge for programming received on a second set:
 - a) Monthly charge for Cablevision supplied equipment: If a converter is required and supplied, reasonable monthly rental charge for that is justified.
 - b) If no converter is required, the comparison with phone service is at best invalid. Most cable networks charge cable companies small monthly amounts (such as 5¢, 10¢, 15¢, etc.) for each subscriber regardless of the number of TV sets or VCR's connected. Obviously a cable company does not absorb these charges, but includes the cost of all such basic channels in the monthly charge to the customers main set. Unlike a telephone, where the basic charge includes one line only, in cable the main charge includes not one basic network, but all these networks, and one should have the right to watch as many channels simultaneously, as one is able to. It is also curious that there is a charge for a 2nd TV set to watch two programs at the same time, but no extra charge for connecting a Video recorder, where one can watch one program while at the same time recording another.